

In the claims:

1. (original) Apparatus for treating tissue specimens by immersion in a liquid, the apparatus comprising a first structure providing a chamber for holding the liquid, and a second structure including holding means for releasably holding the specimens, the first and second structures being relatively moveable in a direction having a vertical component between a first position in which the holding means are relatively close to the chamber and in which the second structure closes the top of the chamber to enable the specimens to be immersed in the liquid whilst the latter is protected from the environment, and a second position in which the holding means are relatively distant from the chamber to enable the specimens to be loaded onto or unloaded from the holding means.

2. (original) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the first structure is stationary and the second structure is shiftable vertically with respect to the first structure.

3. (original) Apparatus according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the holding means include magnets to enable specimens, each provided with a metal mount, to be detachably retained on the second structure by magnetic attraction.

4. (original) Apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the chamber is in the form of an annular trough.

5. (original) Apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the holding means hold the specimens so that the latter depend from the holding means at angularly spaced positions around a circle such that the specimens are lowered into the trough as the second structure is lowered to its first position.

6. (original) Apparatus according to claim 4 or 5, wherein the second structure includes a lid which acts to close the chamber in the first position and the underside of which carries the holding means.

7. (original) Apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the second structure is rotatably moveable around a central vertical axis, enabling specimens to be loaded onto and unloaded from the second structure at a chosen position alongside the apparatus, either by a robotic arm or a human hand.

8. (original) Apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the apparatus has the facility to change the liquid when in the first position, enabling the specimens to be treated by different liquids in a succession of treatment stages, whilst retaining the chamber closed.

9. (original) A method of treating tissue specimens by immersion in a liquid in a chamber, the method comprising loading the specimens onto a holder so that the specimens depend from the holder and are disposed above the liquid in the chamber, effecting relative movement between the chamber and the specimens in one direction to cause immersion of the specimens in the liquid whilst maintaining the chamber closed and protected from the environment during immersion, effecting relative movement between the chamber and the specimens in the opposite direction to bring the specimens out of the liquid, and unloading the treated specimens from the holder.

10. (original) A method according to claim 9, wherein the specimens are treated by different liquids in a plurality of treatment stages.

11. (original) A method according to claim 10, wherein the treatment stages are carried out by successive emptying and filling of the chamber with the different liquids, whilst the specimens remain in the chamber and whilst the chamber remains closed and protected from the environment.

12. (cancelled)

13. (cancelled)